

Food & Nutrition (FaN) Project Bulletin January – February 2022

WELCOME MESSAGE

June 2022 will be the end of the FaN project, so during this final phase we continue our remaining interventions and sharing our knowledge as widely as possible. The pandemic continues to influence what and how we do our interventions. COVID is also challenging the concept of healthy food retail – with gluts or shortages, from supply chain challenges, and with the doors of many food retailers remaining open by selling unhealthy food items. Retail spaces have adapted to COVID-19 protocols to maintain the health of employees and customers, but another threat to consumers' health lies in retailers' high food prices, and the affordability of healthy items.

RESEARCH

In our [Nov. 2020 bulletin](#), we reported that supermarket food prices rose for some items up to 80% and consumers were using various financial coping strategies to make food purchases. Prof. Fitzroy Henry (UTech, JA) has led our research on food accessibility which has shown that the % of minimum wage needed to purchase a low-cost nutritionally balanced basket of goods across JA, SKN and SVG continues to trend upwards. This is a worrying statistic considering that in JA alone, the prevalence rate of severe hunger among the poor is about 24%. The price of a balanced food basket is very high compared to what minimum wage earners can afford. Prof. Henry has presented these and other findings to the JA Minimum Wage Commission last year; click here to read [“Towards a Livable Minimum Wage in Jamaica”](#). A proposal by the FaN project has also been made to the Commission to increase the minimum wage by 36% to be closer to vulnerability rates in other Caribbean countries. This will mean an increase from J\$7,000 to J\$9,540 per week. It is of interest that the Jamaica Government has increased the minimum wage by 28% to J\$9,000 starting April 2022. This increase in consumer spending power can allow for the purchase of more nutritious foods and beverages if it is used for that purpose.

INTERVENTIONS

The food supply chain is a complex network of processes and stakeholders that defines food's journey from farm to fork. Major points of change to shift consumption are (1) production, (2) manufacturing & processing, (3) distribution and (4) consumption.

Production, Manufacturing & Processing

- **Women's Farmers Academy**

18 (SVG) and 19 (SKN) students officially graduated from Round 1 of the Women's Farmers Academy in December 2021. The SVG Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Rural Transformation,

Industry & Labour Hon. Saboto Caesar was a guest speaker. SKN's speakers – SKN Ambassador to the USA. Dr. Thelma Phillip-Browne (who is a FaN SWAG member) and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture Mr. Ron Dublin-Collins.

Over an 8-week period, these women were equipped with the necessary tools to improve the performance of their agricultural businesses in production, manufacturing, and processing. Round 2 of the Academy is ongoing with a larger cohort of women to graduate in March 2022.

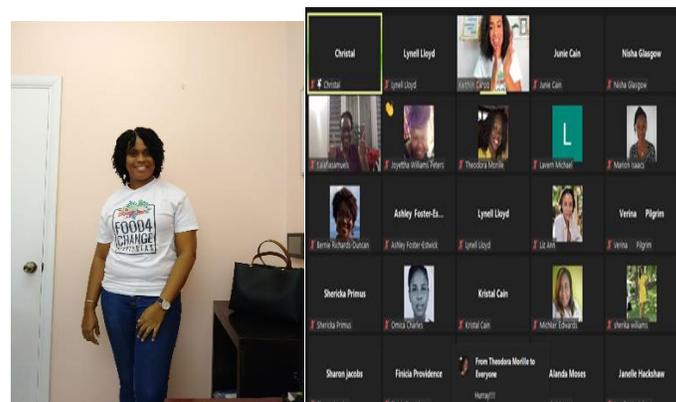


Figure 1: Latoya Jeffers, WFA Graduate from Round one. Figure 2: Screenshot of SVG's virtual graduation ceremony.

- **15 Small Grants**

In addition to financial awards provided to the project's [15 small grant recipients](#) other benefits have included, (1) technical support from RADA, (2) preliminary training in Lifestyle and Nutrition and (3) a full complement of agricultural supplies. Despite COVID delays and other setbacks, 11 of the recipients are already earning revenue from their crops and livestock and two have entered the European market with support from the Eastern Caribbean Trading Agriculture and Development Company.

Distribution

- **Nutrient Cost Analysis Programme**

Also featured in our Nov. 2020 bulletin was our web-based system which has been designed to provide low-income households with information on nutritious and low-cost foods (“best buys”). Analysis has shown that the top five “best buys” for high- and low-income areas contain many imported foods. FaN's solutions involve (1) creating priority lists of affordable local food crops in JA, SKN and SVG for rapid dissemination (2) providing consumers with information on “best buys” to enhance healthy eating practices.



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WEST INDIES



Consumption

- **Marketable Meals Competition**

Since our [Dec. 2021 bulletin](#), the parish-level and national competitions have been cancelled due to COVID. The publication of a recipe book for food industry stakeholders is still planned and will be marketed to major food industry players.

- **Health Education**

Guided by FaN's revision of the HFLE curricula, a collection of nutrition education resources is being designed by FaN and its partners to support teachers and students' healthy eating habits. Outputs of the F4CC Story Writing Competition will include digital scripts and dramatic readings by the Ashe company, while farming/nutritional videos will be co-created with Slow Food Barbados and the CARICOM Secretariat. All resources will be made available to CARICOM Ministries of Education to assist HFLE educators in their teaching.

The FaN project is also focused on ensuring that healthy food is sold within and around the school environment. School Nutrition Standards for JA have been submitted to cabinet for approval, and the standards for SVG and SKN are in development for submission.

Did you know?

Helen's Daughters is one of 18 organisations to recently receive a grant from two famous philanthropists Jack Dorsey (co-founder and former CEO of Twitter) and the Caribbean's very own Rihanna! Read about the exciting news [here](#).

FaN PROJECT TEAM SPOTLIGHT BOOK PUBLICATIONS

FaN's Gender Specialist Dr. Leith Dunn is one of four co-editors of *Gender Issues in Caribbean Health Implications for Family Medicine and Public Health Practitioners*. The book which was published in Jamaica by the University of the West Indies' Faculty of Medical Sciences Family Medicine Programme and the Institute for Gender and Development Studies Mona Unit serves as a useful resource for anyone interested in understanding how medical education and health services can be improved by integrating gender into postgraduate training curricula and health service delivery models. The book was launched on February 21st. Please click [here](#) to watch this exciting event! E-copies are available pro bono from the Family Medicine Programme at Mona and Cave Hill.

Professor Fitzroy Henry of the FaN project and June Holdip, a registered dietitian, published a book that is central to the FaN project's focus on food security and public health. Authoritative, fascinating, and delightful aptly described *The Best Caribbean Foods to Combat Chronic Diseases*. From the ancient origins to present-day uses, the book elegantly displays the health-promoting and other eclectic treasures of Caribbean foods. Policy makers, researchers, teachers, students, shoppers, and the public will all find aspects of the content captivating.



Professor Fitzroy Henry presenting Jamaica's Minister of Health and Wellness Hon. Dr. Christopher Tufton with a copy of his book – *The Best Caribbean Foods to Combat Chronic Diseases*.

